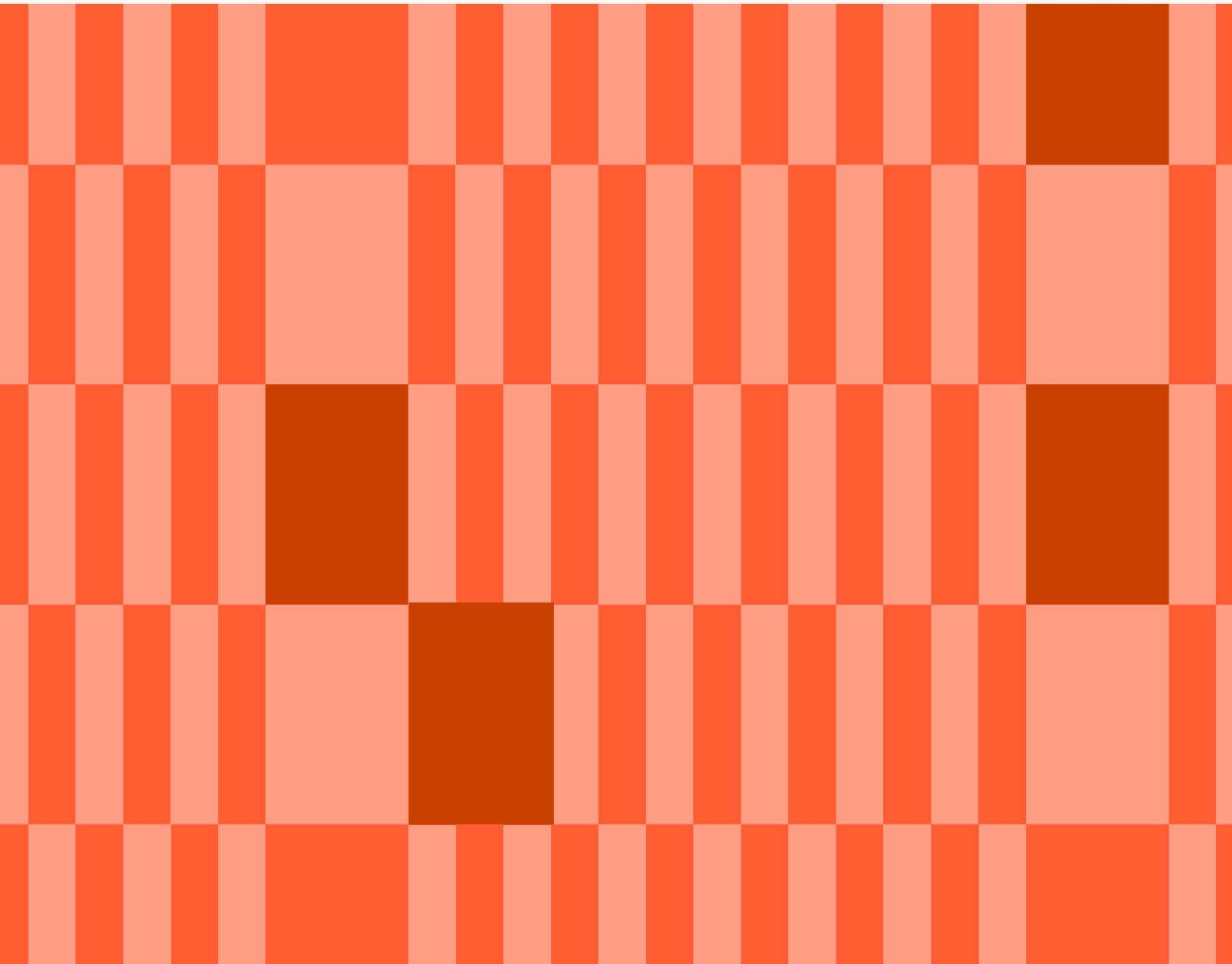


Omni Institute Report

# Laramie County LEAD Evaluation Executive Summary

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Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) Executive Summary  
2024-2026



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## Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) Executive Summary 2024-2026

### Submitted to:

Laramie County LEAD

### For More Information

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### Acknowledgments

Omni Institute thanks LEAD staff, community partners and participants for their contributions to this report.

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# Executive Summary

## Evaluation Overview

Since May 2024, Omni Institute (Omni) has evaluated Laramie County Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD), which aims to reduce recidivism among low-level offenders, strengthen cross-sector collaboration, and improve community public health and safety in Laramie County, Wyoming. The evaluation focused on identifying what's working, areas for improvement, and building LEAD's internal evaluation capacity. This summary provides an overview of key findings from the evaluation; for additional findings and details please see the full Laramie County LEAD Evaluation Report.

## LEAD Reach and Participant Needs

Since May 2024, 418 individuals have been referred to LEAD, with the majority of these (77%, n=297) being self-referrals. Of these referrals, 56 individuals completed an intake assessment and began working with a member of the LEAD staff. The majority of LEAD participants are white (67%, n=28), female (51%, n=21) and have an average age of 36.

At intake, participants indicated significant and overlapping needs across multiple recovery capital domains including:

**“They’ll assist with deposits, get people a phone, just the small things...you don’t think of, like someone needs a phone to get a job, check-in with probation, get accepted into any program. So, like helping with phones, that’s a service that is so needed and you can’t find that in a lot of programs in town.”** — Community Partner



**Housing:** 44% of participants (n=24) were unhoused and 78% (n=42) reported barriers to securing stable housing, primarily related to affordability, credit checks, and background checks.



**Employment & Finances:** 61% of participants (n=33) were unemployed. Nearly all participants (91%, n=49) were experiencing financial challenges, with 63% (n=40) reporting their income rarely or never meets their basic needs.



**Substance Use:** 54% of participants (n=21) reported substance use in the prior 30 days, 48% (n=26) had a prior diagnosis of a substance use disorder, and 22% (n=12) had a prior diagnosis of an alcohol use disorder.



**Documents:** 67% of participants (n=32) had a social security card, 52% (n=28) had a driver's license or state ID, and 47% (n=25) had a birth certificate.



**Legal Involvement:** 60% of participants (n=32) were experiencing active legal concerns, 64% (n=35) had a pending court date, and 41% (n=22) were on probation or parole.





**Physical and Mental Health:** 51% of participants (n=28) reported a recurring health condition and 31% (n=17) reported taking medication for this or another concern.



**Recovery Capital:** 54% of participants (n=27) entered the program with a Brief Assessment of Recovery Capital (BARC-10) score indicating a higher likelihood of sustained recovery, reflecting meaningful existing strengths among participants.

## Key Takeaways

### How LEAD Improves Participants Lives

Through intake assessments and one-on-one case management, LEAD staff develop individualized support plans addressing each participant's unique needs. Services span the full spectrum of recovery capital, including housing assistance, transportation, health and recovery connections, and coverage of essential costs like documents and medications. This hands-on, whole-person approach enabled the LEAD team to meaningfully support clients in achieving their goals across nearly every recovery dimension. Key highlights include:



**Basic Needs:** LEAD provided 1,471 rides to ensure participants could access appointments and treatment, purchased \$1,628.06 in meals and connected 8 participants to food pantries, and purchased \$1,407.55 in clothing. LEAD also provided phones and/or phone minutes to 11 participants to keep them connected to support networks and opportunities.



**Housing & Employment:** LEAD helped 12 participants secure housing and 12 participants establish employment, building financial and physical stability critical to long-term recovery.



**Documents:** LEAD assisted 11 participants in enrolling in SNAP benefits and helped 23 participants obtain vital records including social security cards and driver's licenses removing key barriers to accessing additional services and supports.



**Education:** LEAD supported 2 participants in enrolling in educational programs to further their studies and expand future opportunities.



**Treatment, Recovery and Sobriety:** LEAD referred 7 participants for substance use evaluations, covered drug and alcohol testing fees for 8 participants, supported 19 participants in enrolling in treatment programs, and assisted 13 participants in accessing Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) reflecting a comprehensive and individualized approach to recovery.



Through this service provision, LEAD participants also saw stability or improvements in various aspects of their lives including meeting their goals, decreasing law enforcement contact and improving overall recovery capital.

Participants reported making progress on 87% (n=20) of their stated goals, with 22% reporting doing much better than expected on their goal progress.

For participants with recurring assessments (n=8)

**4**  
reported that their employment status stayed the same or improved.

**6**  
indicated that their substance use improved

**2**  
reported cessation of substance use

**7**  
indicated that their housing status stayed the same or improved

**7**  
indicated that their behavioral/mental health stayed the same or improved.

**8**  
indicated that their physical health stayed the same or improved

62% of respondents (n=5) exceeded the indicator for sustained recovery with a total score of 47 or higher, up from 33% at intake. Overall, BARC-10 scores increased 3.5 points from intake to recurring assessment, with participants indicating stability or improvements in eight of the ten domains. The largest improvements were observed in gaining support from friends, having a living space that supports recovery, and feeling that life is fulfilling and challenging without the use of drugs. Progress in the recovery journey slightly declined as some participants reported re-emerging substance use challenges, including returns to use.

**“I love the LEAD program. It has saved my life.”**  
— LEAD Participant

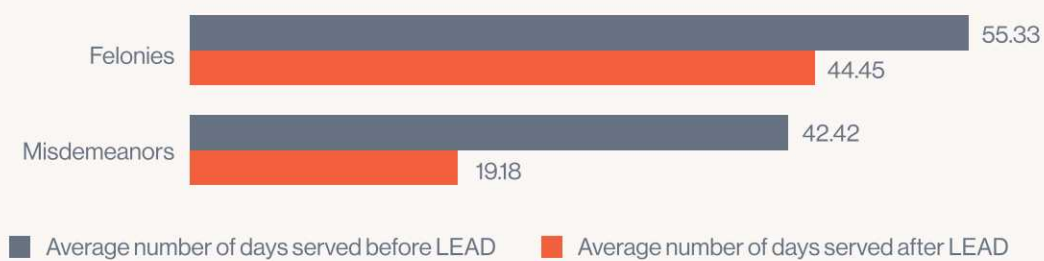


Individuals with justice data (n=33) participants saw a decrease in the time spent in jail for both misdemeanors and felonies from before working with LEAD to after, despite a slight increase in arrest instances (4.2 and 4.9 arrests respectively).

**LEAD participants saw a decrease in the average number of days spent in jail for felonies (11.12 days) and misdemeanors (23.24 days) after beginning their work with LEAD.**

**10** participants have not been rearrested since beginning their work with LEAD.

### Days in Jail Served Before and After LEAD



### Client Satisfaction

Client also indicated high levels of satisfaction with the program. All clients who completed a satisfaction survey (n=14) indicated greater awareness of and access to community services including those that were previously unaffordable, as well as improved relationships with friends, family, and the community.

They credited LEAD with helping them achieve their goals and valued the knowledge and resources provided. Overall satisfaction was high, with participants consistently noting that staff treated them with respect, believed in their capacity to change, and made them feel supported throughout their engagement.

**93%** of participants believe they wouldn't be as far along in their recovery if they had not worked with LEAD.

**“LEAD has been one of the main pillars of my sobriety support network. It would have been impossible to have gotten as far as I have without them.”**

— LEAD Participant



## Why the LEAD Model Works

To gain clearer insight into which elements of the LEAD model supported client success in Laramie County, Omni interviewed LEAD staff and community partners to gather their views on LEAD. Staff and partners shared several aspects of the LEAD model that support its success in Laramie County.

- **LEAD Staff:** LEAD staff are dedicated, knowledgeable, and deeply embedded in the community, their responsiveness, cross-team collaboration, and comprehensive understanding of both individual clients and local resources drives LEAD success.
- **Flexible Program Model:** LEAD's flexible, client-centered model allows staff to meet participants where they are, addressing everything from basic needs to systemic barriers by filling critical service gaps that other agencies can't.
- **Reduced Strain on Partner Resources:** By providing diverse support services, LEAD reduces the burden on partner agencies, allowing them to focus on their core work.
- **Strong Community Partnerships:** LEAD's diverse, trust-based partnerships with community enables wraparound support and seamless collaboration that enhances services for individuals in the community

## External Challenges Facing LEAD

Although many elements of the LEAD model have been successful in Laramie County, program staff, partners, and participants pointed out ongoing challenges that impact the full effective implementation of the LEAD model.

- **Community Culture:** Local culture including stigma and a preference for punitive approaches remain LEAD's greatest barrier.
- **Knowledge and Perceptions of LEAD:** Limited awareness of LEAD among the broader community, partner agencies, and clients themselves undermines buy-in and trust.
- **Limited Community Resources:** Limited resources in Laramie County create logistical barriers for LEAD and its participants.
- **Additional Partnership Opportunities:** There are additional opportunities to facilitate partnerships, particularly among law enforcement, to expand LEAD's reach and effectiveness.
- **Lack of Client Engagement:** While LEAD's flexible model is an asset, for some individuals it can hinder consistent engagement, highlighting the need to balance client-centered flexibility with structure.



## Opportunities for LEAD Growth and Sustainability

In addition to identifying strengths and challenges, LEAD staff and partners also shared insights on what opportunities for growth or continued reflection exist to support the program in long-term sustainability.

- **Additional LEAD Staff and Funding:** Community partners advocated for increased investment to expand the program's reach and maximize its impact.
- **Reviewing Clients on a Case-By-Case Basis:** LEAD's exclusion criteria limit access for some receptive individuals, reinforcing the need for ongoing case-by-case review to maximize reach.
- **Additional Visibility and Data Sharing:** Improving data collection, sharing success stories and expanding community outreach are key opportunities to demonstrate LEAD's impact.

## The Value of a LEAD Dollar

In addition to the effectiveness of diversion models in meeting clients' unique needs, research is well-established that diversion saves money.

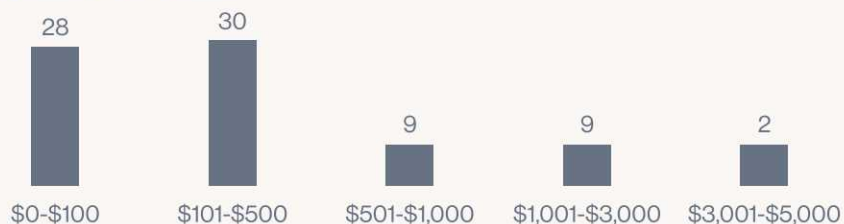
Services provided to clients and resulting expenditure varied by participant, based on several factors, primarily the scope of an individual's needs and the time spent working with LEAD. Financial data includes 78 participants.

Excluding staff time, LEAD spending ranged from \$0 to \$3,320.27 per person, with the majority of participants receiving between \$101 and \$500 in services. The average costs across all participants was \$415.48.

**“When we have people who are housed, when we have people who are in recovery, we have people who are getting consistent mental health therapy either on the psychological illness or on the psychiatric point those are gains for us, and I can tell you without a doubt that we have dozens of individuals in our community who were persistent issues who were always a headache and they are no longer a headache...that is a cost savings for the community.”**

— Community Partner

### Average LEAD Spending Per Person



Individuals who have been in the program for 2+ years have the highest per-person cost (\$535.56 on average), as their needs are likely to evolve over time through continued engagement with LEAD.



# The Cost of Two Paths

The following explores the potential costs avoided by investing in the LEAD model relative to the “business as usual” operational costs for a representative client, John M. It uses publicly available data and research to illustrate the scale of costs that can be avoided when individuals are diverted from the criminal justice system into community services. Let’s explore the individual and financial implications of two potential paths for John; business as usual, or receiving support from LEAD.

## Business as Usual



### John Remains Without Stable Housing:

John’s housing instability continues while he utilizes short term resources such as the local shelter system, costing \$25 per night<sup>11</sup>, or \$750 over a 30-day period. Even if John were able to obtain short-term housing it would be difficult to sustain without stable employment. If he needed rental assistance, Laramie County’s program averaged \$688.75 per household per month<sup>12</sup>, before it was discontinued in 2023. Without a fixed address, accessing benefits, keeping appointments, and maintaining employment remain out of reach.



### John’s Substance Use Goes Untreated:

John makes brief contact with a treatment program but disengages early to focus on other needs. His stimulant and alcohol use continues driving law enforcement contact with each encounter, costing an estimated \$24 in officer time and \$145 per night in jail. If his use escalates into a medical crisis, a single alcohol or drug-related case at CRMC carries a median charge of \$20,640.33<sup>13</sup>. And if he experiences a nonfatal overdose, that costs the system \$221,215<sup>14</sup>.

## LEAD Support



### John Obtains Essential Documents, Unlocking New Opportunities:

A month after working with LEAD, John has a valid driver’s license and social security card, LEAD spent \$50.61 to obtain them, less than the fine for a single traffic stop, and a fraction of one night in jail. That document unlocks a bank account, a job application, and access to benefits he was previously unable to access.



### John Secures Stable Housing:

With identification in hand, his case manager helps him secure stable housing. LEAD’s cost to house an individual is \$349.28, less than two weeks in a shelter. With a stable address, John can receive mail, keep appointments, and begin rebuilding the routine that his other goals depend on.



### John Engages in Substance Use Treatment:

With his housing stabilized, John can focus on addressing his substance use needs by engaging in ongoing treatment. LEAD spent \$301.23 to connect him to





**John Lacks Essential Documents:**

Without a valid license, John cannot legally drive, but without transportation, he cannot get to court, to treatment, or to work. A citation for driving without a license carries a base fine of \$150<sup>15</sup>, with repeat stops escalating to \$750 in fines and up to six months in jail<sup>15</sup>, a cost of up to \$26,100. Even with a license, driving without insurance adds another \$250 to \$750<sup>16</sup> per offense. Without support understanding his parole requirements or getting to appointments, John misses a check-in resulting in a technical violation that triggers an arrest. Each misdemeanor non-trial case costs approximately \$1,000 in attorney and court staff time, with more serious or complex cases, potentially costing tens of thousands.



**John Relies on Public Assistance:**

Without stable work, John begins drawing on public assistance. For an individual making minimum wage Wyoming's unemployment insurance totals \$5,127.20 over 26 weeks<sup>17</sup>.

**Without coordinated, wraparound care, John is forced to address his complex needs through short-term solutions which require the system to spend significant money, but do not move John forward.**

evaluations, referrals, transportation, and medication. If that investment reduces his law enforcement contact by just five incidents over the course of a year, it saves \$120 in officer time and at least \$925 in jail costs. If it prevents a single medical crisis, more than \$20,000 in hospital costs are avoided. Odds of an overdose decrease as do the accompanying costs of more than \$200,000.



**John Stops Cycling Through the System:**

Continuing on his path to recovery, John attends his court and probation appointments. For \$0.54 per ride and a \$184.51 phone, LEAD keeps him in compliance with his legal requirements. The missed appearances and technical violations that most commonly cycle individuals back into the system stop accumulating. For the first time in years, John is not generating new legal exposure reducing the costs of jail time, court staff and attorney fees.



**John Finds Stable Employment:**

A few months into his work with LEAD, John is stably employed. LEAD spent \$367.48 on new interview clothes, job application support, and rides to get him there. John can now reduce or stop his reliance on government benefits including unemployment.

**LEAD is investing fewer dollars in John, and supporting his long-term wellness, reducing future reliance on the system and costs to the community.**



## Recommendations

To address the external challenges facing LEAD and facilitate its continued success, staff and partners shared several recommendations.

- Identify additional opportunities to engage with law enforcement, such as ride-alongs or training opportunities to continue building a strong rapport with officers and encourage agency buy-in.
- Work with law enforcement to identify high-contact individuals to get them connected to LEAD to reduce law enforcement contact and arrests.
- Consider seeking private funding to support the important work LEAD is doing in the community to supplement or replace other funding.
- Continue considering individuals on a case-by-case basis and making exceptions to exclusion criteria where possible.
- Reflect on ways to support clients with diverse needs in continuing to engage with LEAD.
- Reflect on existing available data and opportunities for new or additional data tracking to minimize the burden on LEAD staff and improve regular reporting.
- Identify regular reporting metrics that can be shared consistently (quarterly, biannually, annually) with both community partners and the public to increase knowledge and reduce stigma and show the value of LEAD.
- Seek permission from clients to share their success stories.

## Conclusion

Community partners, staff and participants strongly regard LEAD as an essential resource in the community, providing diverse services to meet unique client needs and establishing foundational support on the journey to wellness. Individuals who work with LEAD show stability or improvements in housing, employment, health, and substance use. Key findings include connections to diverse community resources, improvements in recovery capital, reductions in substance use behaviors and jail time served, and cost savings for individuals and community systems.

Strengths of the LEAD model include staff and partnerships, funding flexibility, and reduced burden on other local agencies. Identified challenges include community culture, limited knowledge of the LEAD model, limited community resources, and client engagement. Recommendations to support future sustainability include securing additional funding and staff, reviewing clients on a case-by-case basis, and sharing data and stories about LEAD to build broader community understanding and buy-in. Ultimately, LEAD is a critical resource to the residents of Laramie County, and by building on current strengths and addressing gaps and challenges, LEAD will be able to serve even more community members to further support a well Wyoming.

